

# THE MYTHS OF VEGETARIANISM

**Anthropological studies showing that no tribal peoples are strictly vegetarian suggest we need to include animal foods in our diets to maintain good health.**

**Part 2 of 2**

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## **MYTH #7: Vegetarians live longer and have more energy and endurance than meat-eaters.**

A vegetarian guidebook published in Great Britain made the following claim: *You and your children don't need to eat meat to stay healthy. In fact, vegetarians claim they are among the healthiest people around, and they can expect to live nine years longer than meat-eaters (this is often because heart and circulatory diseases are rarer). These days almost half the population in Britain is trying to avoid meat, according to a survey by the Food Research Association in January 1990.*<sup>77</sup>

In commenting on this claim of extended lifespan, author Craig Fitzroy astutely points out that:

*The "nine-year advantage" is an oft-repeated but invariably unsourced piece of anecdotal evidence for vegetarianism. But anyone who believes that by snubbing mum's Sunday roast they will be adding a decade to their years on the planet is almost certainly indulging in a bit of wishful thinking.*<sup>78</sup>

And that is what most of the claims for increased longevity in vegetarians are: anecdotal. There is no proof that a healthy vegetarian diet, when compared to a healthy omnivorous diet, will result in a longer life. Additionally, people who choose a vegetarian lifestyle typically also choose not to smoke; they choose to exercise; in short, they choose to live a healthier lifestyle. These things also are factors in one's longevity.

In the scientific literature, there are surprisingly few studies done on vegetarian longevity. Russell Smith, PhD, in his massive review study on heart disease, showed that as animal product consumption increased among some study groups, death rates actually decreased!<sup>79</sup> Such results were not obtained among vegetarian subjects. For example, in a study published by Burr and Sweetnam in 1982, analysis of mortality data revealed that, although vegetarians had a slightly (0.11%) lower rate of heart disease than non-vegetarians, the all-cause death rate was much higher for vegetarians.<sup>80</sup>

Despite claims that studies have shown that meat consumption increased the risk for heart disease and shortened lives, the authors of those studies actually found the opposite. For example, in a 1984 analysis of a 1978 study of vegetarian Seventh Day Adventists, H. A. Kahn concluded:

*Although our results add some substantial facts to the diet-disease question, we recognize how remote they are from establishing, for example, that men who frequently eat meat or women who rarely eat salad are thereby shortening their lives.*<sup>81</sup>

A similar conclusion was reached by D. A. Snowden.<sup>82</sup> Despite these startling admissions, the studies nevertheless concluded the exact opposite and urged people to reduce animal food intake in their diets. Further, both of these studies threw out certain dietary data that clearly showed no connection between eggs, cheese, whole milk and fat attached to meat (all high-fat, high-cholesterol foods) and heart disease. Dr Smith commented:

*In effect, the Kahn [and Snowden] study is yet another example of negative results which are massaged and misinterpreted to support the politically correct assertions that vegetarians live longer lives.*<sup>83</sup>

It is usually claimed that meat-eating peoples have a short lifespan, but the Aborigines of Australia, who traditionally eat a diet rich in animal products, are known for their

longevity (at least before colonisation by Europeans). Within Aboriginal society there is a special caste of the elderly.<sup>84</sup> Obviously, if no old people existed, no such group would have existed.

In his book *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, Dr Price has numerous photographs of elderly native peoples from around the world. Explorers such as Vilhjalmur Stefansson reported great longevity among the Innu (again, before colonisation).<sup>85</sup> Similarly, the people of the Caucasus Mountains live to great ages on a diet of fatty pork and whole raw milk products. The Hunzas, also known for their robust health and longevity, drink substantial portions of goat's milk, which has a higher saturated fat content than cow's milk.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the largely vegetarian Hindus of southern India have the shortest lifespans in the world, partly because of a lack of food but also because of a distinct lack of animal protein in their diets.<sup>87</sup>

H. Leon Abrams's comments are instructive here:

*Vegetarians often maintain that a diet of meat and animal fat leads to a premature death. Anthropological data from primitive societies do not support such contentions.*<sup>88</sup>

Dr Price travelled around the world in the 1920s and 1930s, investigating native diets with regard to endurance and energy levels. Without exception, he found a strong correlation between diets rich in animal fats and robust health and athletic ability. Special foods for Swiss athletes, for example, included bowls of fresh, raw cream. In Africa, Dr Price discovered that groups whose diets were rich in fatty meats and fish, and organ meats like liver, consistently carried off the prizes in athletic contests, and that meat-eating tribes always dominated tribes whose diets were largely vegetarian.<sup>89</sup>

It is popular in sports nutrition to recommend "carb-loading" for athletes to increase their endurance levels. But recent studies done in New York and South Africa show that the opposite is true: athletes who "carb-loaded" had significantly less endurance than those who "fat-loaded" before athletic events.<sup>90</sup>

#### **MYTH #8: The "cave man" diet was low-fat and/or vegetarian. Humans evolved as vegetarians.**

Our Palaeolithic ancestors were hunter-gatherers, and three schools of thought have developed as to what their diet was like. One group argues for a high-fat and animal-based diet supplemented with seasonal fruits, berries, nuts, root vegetables and wild grasses. The second argues that primitive peoples consumed assorted lean meats and large amounts of plant foods. The third argues that our human ancestors evolved as vegetarians.

The "lean" Palaeolithic diet approach has been argued for quite voraciously by Drs Loren Cordain and Boyd Eaton in a number of popular and professional publications.<sup>91</sup> Cordain and Eaton are believers in the "lipid hypothesis" of heart disease—the belief (debunked in Myth #6; see part one) that saturated fat and dietary cholesterol contribute to heart disease. Because of this, and the fact that Palaeolithic peoples or their modern equivalents did/do not suffer from heart disease, Cordain and Eaton espouse the theory that Palaeolithic peoples consumed most of their fat calories from mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated sources and

not saturated fats. Believing that saturated fats are dangerous to our arteries, Cordain and Eaton stay in step with current establishment nutritional thought and encourage modern peoples to eat a diet like our ancestors. This diet, they believe, was rich in lean meats and a variety of vegetables but was low in saturated fat.

However, the evidence they produce to support this theory is very selective and misleading.<sup>92</sup> Saturated fats do not cause heart disease, as was shown above, and our Palaeolithic ancestors ate quite a bit of saturated fat from a variety of plant and animal sources.

We learn from authoritative sources that prehistoric humans of the North American continent ate such animals as mammoth, camel, sloth, bison, mountain sheep, pronghorn antelope, beaver, elk, mule deer and llama.<sup>93</sup>

*Mammoth, sloth, mountain sheep, bison and beaver are fatty animals in the modern sense, in that they have a thick layer of subcutaneous fat, as do the many species of bear and wild pig whose remains have been found at Paleolithic sites throughout the world.*<sup>94</sup>

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Analysis of many types of fat in game animals like antelope, bison, caribou, dog, elk, moose, seal and mountain sheep shows that they are rich in saturates and mono-unsaturates but relatively low in polyunsaturates.<sup>95</sup> Further, while buffalo and game animals may have lean, non-marbled muscle meats, it is a mistake to assume that only these parts were eaten by hunter-gatherer groups like the Native Americans,

who often hunted animals selectively for their fat and fatty organs, as the following section will show.

Anthropologists/explorers such as Vilhjalmur Stefansson reported that the Innu and North American Indian tribes were too lean: they knew sickness would follow if they did not consume enough fat.<sup>96</sup> In other words, these primitive peoples did not like having to eat lean meat.

Northern Canadian Indians would also deliberately hunt older male caribou and elk, for these animals carried a 50-pound slab of back fat on them which the Indians would eat with relish. This "back fat" is highly saturated. Native Americans would also refrain from hunting bison in the springtime (when the animals' fat stores were low, due to scarce food supply during the winter), preferring to hunt, kill and consume them in the fall when they were fattened up.<sup>97</sup>

Explorer Samuel Hearne, writing in 1768, described how the Native American tribes he came into contact with would selectively hunt caribou just for the fatty parts:

*On the twenty-second of July, we met several strangers, whom we joined in pursuit of the caribou, which were at this time so plentiful that we got everyday a sufficient number for our support, and indeed too frequently killed several merely for the tongues, marrow and fat.*<sup>98</sup>

While Cordain and Eaton are certainly correct in saying that our ancestors ate meat, their contentions about fat intake, as well as the type of fat consumed, are simply incorrect.

While various vegetarian and vegan authorities like to think that we evolved as a species on a vegan or vegetarian diet, there exists little from the realm of nutritional anthropology to support these ideas.

To begin with, in his journeys Dr Price never once found a totally vegetarian culture. It should be remembered that Dr Price visited and investigated several population groups who were, for all intents and purposes, the 20th-century equivalents of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Dr Price was on the lookout for a vegetarian culture, but he came up empty. Price stated:

*As yet I have not found a single group of primitive racial stock which was building and maintaining excellent bodies by living entirely on plant foods.*<sup>99</sup>

Anthropological data support this. Throughout the globe, all societies show a preference for animal foods and fats, and it seems that our ancestors only turned to large-scale farming when they had to, due to increased population pressures.<sup>100</sup> Abrams and other authorities have shown that prehistoric man's quest for more animal foods was what spurred his expansion over the Earth, and that he apparently hunted certain species to extinction.<sup>101</sup>

Price also found that those peoples who out of necessity consumed more grains and legumes, had higher rates of dental decay than those who consumed more animal products. In his papers on vegetarianism, Abrams presents archaeological evidence that supports this finding: skulls of ancient peoples who were largely vegetarian have teeth containing caries and abscesses and show evidence of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.<sup>102</sup> The appearance of farming and the increased dependence on plant foods for our subsistence was clearly harmful to our health.

Finally, it is simply not possible for our prehistoric ancestors to have been vegetarian because they would not have been able to get enough calories or nutrients to survive on the plant foods that were available. The reason for this is that humans did not know how to cook or control fire at that time, and the great majority of plant foods, especially grains and legumes, must be cooked in order to render them edible to humans.<sup>103</sup> Most people do not know that many of the plant foods we consume today are poisonous in their raw states.<sup>104</sup>

Based on all of this evidence, it is certain that our ancestors, the progenitors of humanity, ate a very non-vegetarian diet that was rich in saturated fatty acids.

#### **MYTH #9: Meat and saturated fat consumption have increased in the 20th century, with a corresponding increase in heart disease and cancer.**

Statistics do not bear out such fancies. Butter consumption has plummeted from 18 lb (8.165 kg) per person a year in 1900 to less than 5 lb (2.27 kg) per person a year today.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Westerners, urged on by government health agencies, have reduced their intake of eggs, cream, lard and pork. Chicken consumption has risen in the past few decades, but chicken is lower in saturated fat than either beef or pork.

Furthermore, a survey of cookbooks published in America in the 19th and early 20th centuries shows that people of earlier times ate plenty of animal foods and saturated fats. For example, in the *Baptist Ladies Cook Book* (Monmouth, Illinois, 1895), virtually every recipe calls for butter, cream or lard. Recipes for creamed vegetables are numerous as well. A scan of the *Searchlight Recipe Book* (Capper Publications, 1931) also has similar recipes: creamed liver, creamed cucumbers, hearts braised in buttermilk, etc. British Jews, as shown by the *Jewish Housewives Cookbook* (London, 1846), also had diets rich in cream, butter, eggs, and lamb and beef tallows. One recipe for German waffles, for example, calls for a dozen egg yolks and an entire pound of butter. A recipe for oyster pie from the Baptist cookbook calls for a quart of cream and a dozen eggs, and so forth and so on.

It does not appear, then, that people ate leaner diets in the last century. It is true that beef consumption has risen in the last few decades, but what has also risen precipitously, however, is consumption of margarine and other food products containing *trans*-fatty acids,<sup>106</sup> lifeless, packaged "foods", processed vegetable oils,<sup>107</sup> carbohydrates<sup>108</sup> and refined sugar.<sup>109</sup>

Since one does not see chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease in beef-eating native peoples like the Masai and Samburu, it is not possible for beef to be the culprit behind these modern epidemics. This, of course, points the finger squarely at the other dietary factors as the most likely causes.

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#### **MYTH #10: Soy products are adequate substitutes for meat and dairy products.**

It is typical for vegans and vegetarians in the Western world to rely on various soy products for their protein needs. There is little doubt the billion-dollar soy industry has profited immensely from the anti-cholesterol, anti-meat gospel of current nutritional thought. Whereas, not so long ago, soy was an Asian food primarily used as a condiment, now a variety of processed soy products proliferate in the marketplace.

While the traditionally fermented soy foods of miso, tamari, tempeh and natto are definitely healthful in measured amounts, the hyper-processed soy "foods" that most vegetarians consume are not.

Non-fermented soybeans and foods made with them are high in phytic acid,<sup>110</sup> an anti-nutrient that binds to minerals in the digestive tract and carries them out of the body. Vegetarians are known for their tendencies towards mineral deficiencies, especially of zinc,<sup>111</sup> and it is the high phytate content of grain- and legume-based diets that is to blame.<sup>112</sup> Though several traditional food-preparation techniques such as soaking, sprouting and fermenting can significantly reduce the phytate content of grains and legumes,<sup>113</sup> such methods are not commonly known about or used by modern peoples, including vegetarians. This places them (and others who eat a diet rich in whole grains) at a greater risk for mineral deficiencies.

Processed soy foods are also rich in trypsin inhibitors, which hinder protein digestion. Textured vegetable protein (TVP), soy

"milk" and soy protein powders, and popular vegetarian meat and milk substitutes are entirely fragmented foods, made by treating soybeans with high heat and various alkaline washes to extract the beans' fat content or to neutralise their potent enzyme inhibitors.<sup>114</sup> These practices completely denature the beans' protein content, rendering it very hard to digest. MSG, a neurotoxin, is routinely added to TVP to make it taste like the various foods it imitates.<sup>115</sup>

On a purely nutritional level, soybeans, like all legumes, are deficient in cysteine and methionine, vital sulphur-containing amino acids, as well as tryptophan, another essential amino acid. Furthermore, soybeans contain no vitamins A or D, required by the body to assimilate and utilise the beans' proteins.<sup>116</sup> It is probably for this reason that Asian cultures that do consume soybeans usually combine them with fish or fish broths (abundant in fat-soluble vitamins) or other fatty foods.

Parents who feed their children soy-based formula should be aware of its extremely high phytoestrogen content. Some scientists have estimated a child being fed soy formula is ingesting the hormonal equivalent of five birth control pills a day.<sup>117</sup> Such a high intake could have disastrous results. Also, soy formula contains no cholesterol, which is vital for brain and nervous system development.

Though research is still ongoing, some recent studies have indicated that soy's phytoestrogens could be causative factors in some forms of breast cancer,<sup>118</sup> penile birth defects<sup>119</sup> and infantile leukaemia.<sup>120</sup> Soy's phytoestrogens, or isoflavones, have been definitely shown to depress thyroid function<sup>121</sup> and to cause infertility in every animal species studied so far.<sup>122</sup>

Clearly, modern soy products and isolated isoflavone supplements are not healthy foods for vegetarians, vegans or anyone else, yet these are the very ones that are most consumed.

### **MYTH #11: The human body is not designed for meat consumption.**

Some vegetarian groups claim that since humans possess grinding teeth, like herbivorous animals, and longer intestines than carnivorous animals, this proves the human body is better suited for vegetarianism.<sup>123</sup> This argument fails to note several human physiological features which clearly indicate a design for animal product consumption.

First and foremost is our stomach's production of hydrochloric acid, something not found in herbivores. Hydrochloric acid activates protein-splitting enzymes. Further, the human pancreas manufactures a full range of digestive enzymes to handle a wide variety of foods, both animal and vegetable.

Dr Walter Voegtlin's in-depth comparison of the human digestive system with that of the dog (a carnivore) and the sheep (a herbivore) clearly shows that we are closer in anatomy to the carnivorous dog than the herbivorous sheep.<sup>124</sup> While humans may have longer intestines than animal carnivores, they are not as long as herbivores; nor do we possess multiple stomachs like many herbivores; nor do we chew cud. Our physiology definitely indicates a mixed feeder or an omnivore—much the same as our relatives the mountain gorilla and chimpanzee, who have all been observed eating small animals and in some cases other primates.<sup>125</sup>

### **MYTH #12: Eating animal flesh causes violent, aggressive behaviour in humans.**

Some authorities on vegetarian diets, such as Dr Ralph Ballantine,<sup>126</sup> claim that the fear and terror (if any; see Myth #15) an animal experiences at death is somehow "transferred" into its flesh and organs and "becomes" a part of the person who eats it.

These thinkers would do well to note that no scientific studies exist to support such a theory, and also remember the fact that a tendency towards irrational anger is a symptom of low vitamin B12 levels—which, as we have seen, are common in vegans and vegetarians.

In his travels, Dr Price always noted the extreme happiness and ingratiating natures of the peoples he encountered, all of whom were meat-eaters.

### **MYTH #13: Animal products contain numerous harmful toxins.**

A recent vegetarian newsletter claimed the following:

*Most people don't realize that meat products are loaded with poisons and toxins! Meat, fish and eggs all decompose and putrefy extremely rapidly. As soon as an animal is killed, self-destruct enzymes are released, causing the formation of denatured substances called ptyloamines, which cause cancer.<sup>127</sup>*

If meat, fish and eggs do indeed generate cancerous "ptyloamines", it is very strange that people have not been dying in droves from cancer for the past million years. Such sensationalistic and nonsensical claims cannot be supported by

historical facts.

This article then went on to mention "mad cow disease" (BSE), parasites, salmonella, hormones, nitrates and pesticides as toxins in animal products. Hormones, nitrates and pesticides are present in commercially raised animal products (as well as commercially raised fruits, grains and vegetables) and are definitely things to be concerned about. However, one can avoid these chemicals by taking care to consume range-fed, organic meats, eggs and dairy products which do not contain harmful man-made toxins.

Parasites are easily avoided by taking normal precautions in food preparations. Pickling or fermenting meats, as is custom in traditional societies, protects against parasites. In his travels, Dr Price always found healthy, disease-free, parasite-free peoples eating raw meat and dairy products as part of their diets.

Similarly, Dr Francis Pottenger, in his experiments with cats, demonstrated that the healthiest, happiest cats were the ones on the all-raw-food diet. The cats eating cooked meats and pasteurised milk sickened and died and had numerous parasites.<sup>128</sup> Salmonella can be transmitted by plant products as well as animal.

It is often claimed by vegetarians that meat is harmful to our bodies because ammonia is released from the breakdown of its proteins. Although it is true that ammonia production does result from meat digestion, our bodies quickly convert this substance into harmless urea. The alleged toxicity of meat is greatly exaggerated by vegetarians.

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"Mad cow disease", or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is most likely not caused by cows eating animal parts with their food—a feeding practice that goes back over 100 years. British organic farmer Mark Purdey has argued convincingly that cows that get mad cow disease are the very ones that have had a particular organophosphate insecticide applied to their backs, or have grazed on soils which lack magnesium but contain high levels of aluminium.<sup>129</sup>

Small outbreaks of "mad cow disease" have also occurred among people who reside near cement works and chemical factories and in some areas with a particular type of volcanic soil.<sup>130</sup>

Purdey theorises that the organophosphate pesticides got into the cows' fat through a spraying program, and then were ingested by the cows again with the animal parts feeding. Seen this way, it is the insecticides, via the parts feeding (and not the parts themselves or their associated "prions"), that has caused this outbreak. As noted before, cows have been eating ground-up animal parts in their feeds for over 100 years. It was never a problem before the introduction of these particular insecticides.

Recently, Purdey has gained support from Dr Donald Brown, a British biochemist who has also argued for a non-infectious cause of BSE. Brown attributes BSE to environmental toxins, specifically manganese overload.<sup>131</sup>

#### **MYTH #14: Eating meat or animal products is less "spiritual" than eating only plant foods.**

It is often claimed that those who eat meat or animal products are somehow less "spiritually evolved" than those who do not. Though this is not a nutritional or academic issue, those who do include animal products in their diet are often made to feel inferior in some way. This issue, therefore, is worth addressing.

Several world religions place no restrictions on animal consumption, and nor did their founders. The Jews eat lamb at their most holy festival, the Passover. Muslims also celebrate Ramadan with lamb before entering into their fast. Jesus Christ, like other Jews, partook of meat at the Last Supper (according to the canonical Gospels). It is true that some forms of Buddhism do place strictures on meat consumption, but dairy products are always allowed. Similar tenets are found in Hinduism. As part of the Samhain celebration, Celtic pagans would slaughter the weaker animals of the herds and cure their meat for the oncoming winter. It is not true, therefore, that eating animal foods is always connected with "spiritual inferiority".

Nevertheless, it is often claimed that since eating meat involves the taking of a life, it is somehow tantamount to murder. Leaving aside the religious philosophies that often permeate this issue, what appears to be at hand is a misunderstanding of the life force and how it works.

Modern peoples (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) have lost touch with what it takes to survive in our world—something native peoples never lose sight of. We do not necessarily hunt or clean our meats: we purchase steaks and chops at the supermarket. We

do not necessarily toil in rice paddies: we buy bags of brown rice. And so forth, and so on.

When Native Americans killed a game animal for food, they would routinely offer a prayer of thanks to the animal's spirit for giving its life so they could live. In our world, life feeds off life. Destruction is always balanced with generation. This is a good thing. Unchecked, the life force becomes cancerous. If animal food consumption is viewed in this manner, it is hardly murder but sacrifice. Modern peoples would do well to remember this.

#### **MYTH #15: Eating animal foods is inhumane.**

Without question, some commercially raised livestock live in deplorable conditions where sickness and suffering are common. In countries like Korea, food animals such as dogs are sometimes killed in horrific ways, e.g., beaten to death with a club. Our recommendations for animal foods consumption most definitely do not endorse such practices.

As noted in our discussion of Myth #1, commercial farming of livestock results in an unhealthy food product, whether that product be meat, milk, butter, cream or eggs. Our ancestors did not consume such standard foodstuffs, and neither should we.

It is possible to raise animals humanely. This is why organic, preferably biodynamic, farming is to be encouraged: it is cleaner and more efficient, and produces healthier animals and foodstuffs from those animals.

Each person should make every effort, then, to purchase organically raised livestock (and plant foods). Not only does this better support our bodies—as organic foods are more nutrient-dense<sup>132</sup> and are free from hormone and pesticide residues—but this also supports smaller farms and is therefore better for the economy.<sup>133</sup>

Nevertheless, many people have philosophical problems with eating animal flesh, and these sentiments must be respected. Dairy products and eggs, though, are not the result of an animal's death and are fine alternatives

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for these people.

It should also not be forgotten that agriculture, which involves both the clearance of land to plant crops and the protection and maintenance of those crops, results in many animal deaths.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, the belief that "becoming vegetarian" will somehow spare animals from dying is one with no foundation in fact.

#### **BIOCHEMICAL AND GENETIC INDIVIDUALITY**

As a cleansing diet, vegetarianism is sometimes a good choice. Several health conditions (e.g., gout) can often be ameliorated by a temporary reduction in intake of animal products and an increase of plant foods. But such measures must not be continuous throughout life: there are vital nutrients found only in animal foods that we must ingest for optimal health.

Furthermore, there is no one diet that will work for every person. Some vegetarians and vegans, in their zeal to get converts, are blind to this biochemical fact.

"Biochemical individuality" is a subject worth clarifying. Coined by nutritional biochemist Roger Williams, PhD, the term

refers to the fact that different people require different nutrients based on their unique genetic make-up. Ethnic and racial backgrounds figure in this concept as well. A diet that works for one may not work as well for someone else.

As a practitioner, I've seen several clients following a vegetarian diet and having severe health problems: obesity, candidiasis, hypothyroidism, cancer, diabetes, leaky gut syndrome, anaemia and chronic fatigue. Because of the widespread rhetoric that a vegetarian diet is "always healthier" than a diet that includes meat or animal products, these people saw no reason to change their diet, even though that was the cause of their problems. What these people actually needed for optimal health was more animal foods and fats and fewer carbohydrates.

Further, due to peculiarities in genetics and individual biochemistry, some people simply cannot have a vegetarian diet because of such things as lectin intolerance and desaturase enzyme deficiencies. Lectins present in legumes, a prominent feature of vegetarian diets, are not tolerated by many people. Others have grain sensitivities, especially to gluten, or to grain proteins in general. Again, since grains are a major feature of vegetarian diets, such people cannot thrive on them.<sup>135</sup>

Desaturase enzyme deficiencies are usually present in those people of Inuit, Scandinavian, Northern European and sea coast ancestry. They lack the ability to convert alpha-linolenic acid into EPA and DHA, two omega-3 fatty acids intimately involved in the function of the immune and nervous systems. The reason for this is because these people's ancestors got an abundance of EPA and DHA from the large amounts of cold-water fish they ate. Over time, because of non-use, they lost the ability to manufacture the necessary enzymes to create EPA and DHA in their bodies. For these people, vegetarianism is simply not possible. They *must* get their EPA and DHA from food, and EPA is only found in animal foods. DHA is present in some algae, but the amounts are much lower than in fish oils.<sup>136</sup>

It is also apparent that vegan diets are not suitable for all people due to inadequate cholesterol production in the liver, and cholesterol is only found in animal foods. It is often said that the body makes enough cholesterol to get by and that there is no reason to consume foods that contain it (i.e., animal foods). However, recent research has shown otherwise. Singer's work at the University of California, Berkeley, has shown that the cholesterol in eggs improves memory in older people.<sup>137</sup> In other words, these elderly people's own cholesterol was insufficient to improve their memory, but added dietary cholesterol from eggs was.

Though it appears that some people do well on little or no meat and remain healthy as lacto-vegetarians or lacto-ovo-vegetarians, the reason for this is because these diets are healthier for those people, not because they're healthier in general. However, a total absence of animal products, whether meat, fish, insects, eggs, butter or dairy, is to be avoided. Though it may take years, problems will eventually ensue under such dietary regimes and they will certainly show in future generations. Dr Price's seminal research unequivocally demonstrated this.

The reason for this is simple evolution: humanity evolved eating animal foods and fats as part of its diet, and our bodies are

suited and accustomed to them. One cannot change evolution in a few years.

Dr Abrams said it well when he wrote this:

*Humans have always been meat-eaters. The fact that no human society is entirely vegetarian, and those that are almost entirely vegetarian suffer from debilitated conditions of health, seems unequivocally to prove that a plant diet must be supplemented with at least a minimum amount of animal protein to sustain health. Humans are meat-eaters and always have been. Humans are also vegetable-eaters and always have been, but plant foods must be supplemented by an ample amount of animal protein to maintain optimal health.*<sup>138</sup>

**Further, due to peculiarities in genetics and individual biochemistry, some people simply cannot have a vegetarian diet because of such things as lectin intolerance and desaturase enzyme deficiencies.**

#### **Author's Notes:**

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#### **Editor's Notes:**

- Due to space limitations, we are not able to publish the endnotes accompanying Dr Stephen Byrnes's article. Instead, we have posted these on our website, <http://www.nexusmagazine.com>, but we can also email and snail-mail them upon request.
- The full text of the article, including endnotes, is also available on the author's website at [http://www.powerhealth.net/selected\\_articles.htm](http://www.powerhealth.net/selected_articles.htm).

Dr Stephen Byrnes's article was originally published in the *Townsend Letter for Doctors & Patients*, July 2000, and was revised in January 2002.

#### **Recommended Reading/Research**

- The Weston A. Price Foundation: <http://www.westonaprice.org>
- Why I am Not a Vegetarian: <http://www.acsh.org/publications/priorities/0902/vegetarian.html>
- Beyond Vegetarianism: <http://www.beyondveg.com>
- The Cholesterol Myths: <http://www.ravnskov.nu/cholesterol.htm>
- The Paleolithic Diet Page: <http://www.panix.com/~paleodiet/>
- The Great Fallacies of Vegetarianism: <http://www.vanguardonline.f9.co.uk/00509.htm>
- National Animal Interest Alliance: <http://www.naiaonline.org/>
- PETA Sucks: <http://www.petasucks.cc>
- Animal Rights.net: <http://www.animalrights.net>

#### **About the Author:**

Stephen Byrnes, PhD, RNCP, enjoys robust health on a diet that includes butter, cream, eggs, meat, whole milk, cheese and liver. He is the author of *Diet & Heart Disease: It's NOT What You Think and Digestion Made Simple* (Whitman Books, 2001), and *The Lazy Person's Whole Foods Cookbook* (Ecclesia Life Mana, 2001). He is based in the USA. Visit his website at <http://www.PowerHealth.net>.